LIS 6919 Seminar in Qualitative Research in LIS
Spring 2011

Instructor: Fill in info here
Day and Time: Mondays, 2-4:45pm
Location: Gregory Conference Room, Shores Building (in Goldstein Library)
Course Blog: http://fill.in.url.here

Course Description

This seminar covers a variety of qualitative research methods that may be used in library and information science. It explores general, epistemological, and ethical issues with qualitative research; methods of data collection; techniques for data analysis; and evaluation of qualitative research.

Prerequisites

- Doctoral student standing
- Completion of LIS 6279, Seminar in Research in Information Studies, or a similar research methods course

The instructor may waive these requirements under exceptional circumstances.

Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- follow qualitative research processes and understand their similarities and differences;
- explain epistemological and philosophical positions in qualitative research and their individual place in this landscape;
- conduct practical qualitative data collection and coding;
- choose between and employ a variety of qualitative research methods and techniques for analysis;
- evaluate qualitative research by both traditional and new criteria; and
- respond to ethical, moral, and political issues that arise when conducting qualitative research.

Assignments

In-class activities (32%): There are eight in-class activities throughout the semester (indicated in the course calendar), each offering you the chance to get hands-on practical experience with topics within and methods of qualitative research. The exact nature of each activity varies; you may be working individually, in pairs, or in small groups (thus paralleling real-life qualitative research projects) depending on the topic and particular activity each week. Active participation in, contribution to, and completion of each of these is worth 4% of your grade.
Reflection posts (32%): After each of the eight in-class activities, you should post a short reflection on what you learned from the readings, in-class discussion, and activity to the class blog. A major tenet of most qualitative research is for the researcher to reflect on their data, analysis, and findings; this weekly assignment will help you reflect on and "think out loud" about topics as we cover them. It will also help you develop your own path through the course, as you learn about qualitative research and reflect on what you learn. This should include relating later topics to those covered earlier; qualitative research is a cyclical process that often revisits prior stages. In addition, you are strongly encouraged and recommended to read and respond to your fellow students' posts, sharing your ideas and thoughts with them. You may also post reflections on the readings outside of these weeks if you like. Each reflection post is worth 4% and is due no later than 11:59pm on the Friday following that week's class.

Project (24%): To help you gain experience in qualitative research, you will complete a small independent project during the semester. Depending on your stage in the doctoral program and your particular interests and needs, this may take many forms. I encourage you, however, to use this project to gain experience with designing qualitative research or collecting qualitative research data. Above all, you should consider and select a project that (a) contributes to both your theoretical and practical understanding and knowledge about qualitative research and methods, and (b) helps your progress through your doctoral program. You should first discuss your ideas and thinking with the instructor, then submit via e-mail a brief description of your project, due by 2pm on 1/31. A written report on your project is due via e-mail to the instructor by 2pm on 4/18. You will also give a brief presentation (about 15 minutes + 5 minutes for Q&A) in-class on 4/18.

Project updates (12%): Three times during the semester you will make a short post to the class blog updating us on the progress you have made with your project. As with the activity reflections, you are strongly encouraged and recommended to read and respond to the updates of your fellow students, sharing your ideas and thoughts with them. Each update is worth 4%; these should be posted by 11:59pm on 2/18, 3/18, and 4/8 (all Fridays).

Grading and Evaluation

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<td>Reflection posts</td>
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The following scale will be used for final grades:

- 93%-100% A
- 90%-92% A-
- 87%-89% B+
- 83%-86% B
- 80%-82% B-

(Note that grades below B- are considered failing in graduate school)
Course Calendar and Readings

You can think of this seminar as consisting of four segments:

- Weeks 1-4: Overview and general issues
- Weeks 5-8: Methods of data collection
- Weeks 9-12: Methods of data analysis
- Weeks 13-15: Evaluation, ethics, and project presentations

Topics will, however, overlap between weeks and segments; qualitative research is a cyclical process that often revisits earlier stages, and there is particularly significant overlap between the data collection and data analysis processes. Readings, activities, and discussion will often refer and relate to previous weeks and topics. As the semester progresses you should also discover many links between earlier topics and later ones.

Many of the course readings listed below are available via the FSU Libraries, either online or physically in Goldstein, Strozier, or Dirac. Those readings that are not currently available via the FSU Libraries will be placed on reserve in Goldstein Library for your use and convenience.

Week 1 (January 10ʰ): Course introduction and overview

Activity #1: Introducing qualitative research (reflection post due Friday 1/14)


Week 2 (January 17ʰ): The qualitative research process

*No class this week due to the holiday; we will discuss these readings next week
No post required this week*

Week 3 (January 24th): Epistemological and philosophical issues
Activity #2: Considering epistemologies (reflection post due Friday 1/28)


Week 4 (January 31st): General data collection, coding, and analysis
Project description due via e-mail today (1/31, 2pm)
No post required this week


[Order of remaining weeks is relatively flexible]

Week 5 (February 7th): Ethnography (1/2)
Activity #3: Ethnographic description (reflection post due Friday 2/11)

Week 6 (February 14th): Ethnography (2/2): Virtual and multi-sited

**Project update #1** due Friday 2/18


Week 7 (February 21st): Interviews

**Activity #4**: Practicing interviewing techniques (reflection post due Friday 2/25)


Week 8 (February 28th): Focus groups and case studies

**Activity #5**: Miniature case study (reflection post due Friday 3/1)


Week 9: Spring Break *(no class this week, enjoy the break!)*
Week 10 (March 14th): Ethnomethodology and hermeneutics
Project update #2 due Friday 3/18


Week 11 (March 21st): Grounded theory
Activity #6: Coding in grounded theory (reflection post due Friday 3/25)


Week 12 (March 28th): Content analysis and discourse analysis
Activity #7: Content analysis exercise (reflection post due Friday 4/1)

Week 13 (April 4th): Reliability, validity, and evaluation
   Activity #8: Validity and its alternatives (reflection post due Friday 4/8)
   Project update #3 also due Friday 4/8


Week 14 (April 11th): Ethics of qualitative research
   No post required this week


Week 15 (April 18th): Project presentations and course wrap-up
   Project due (via e-mail by 2pm)
   No readings for this week; finish your project and prepare for your presentation!

Academic Honor Policy

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. As a student, you are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to your pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm.)

Attendance Policy

You are expected to come to class each week prepared to discuss the topic and readings for that week with the instructor and fellow students. Active participation and discussion both in and out of class is strongly encouraged; you should ask questions, analyze and critique the readings, and
as a group gain an understanding of the topic area and issues within it. Remember that we, as colleagues, are here to collectively learn and grow our understanding of qualitative research methods. Attending class; asking and answering questions in class; and thoughtfully discussing readings with your classmates in class, on the class blog, etc. will greatly help this process and your progress in both this seminar and your doctoral program.

Accommodations will be made for students who must miss class due to suffering serious illnesses or deaths in the immediate family; being called to active military duty or jury duty; religious holy days; presenting at a conference; and official University activities. You should inform the instructor why you will miss or have missed a class or assignment as soon as possible. You are encouraged to discuss any class sessions you missed with your fellow classmates. As colleagues in training I expect you to have many of the same constraints as faculty; these will be accommodated as they occur, as long as you maintain open communication!

**First Day Attendance:** University-wide policy requires all students to attend the first class meeting of all classes for which they are registered. The School of Library and Information Studies will drop students from a course they registered for if they do not attend the first class meeting. In order to enforce this policy, the instructor will take attendance at the first class meeting and report absences to the director of the School.

**Late Assignment Policy**

In general, late assignments will not earn full credit. In cases of constraints, emergencies, and crises that will result in you submitting an assignment late, you should let the instructor know as soon as possible. Such issues unfortunately occur when we least expect them; this is OK and we will deal with the repercussions of any crises on your work in this course together, making arrangements to have you make up the work that you have missed.

**Americans with Disability Act**

If you are a student with disabilities and need academic accommodation, you should:

1. register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and
2. bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.
For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:
Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/

**Syllabus Change Policy**

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the grading and evaluation of the course, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.